

View, issue 21: Invisible Labor

Deadline: Jun 30, 2018

Agata Zborowska, Warsaw

View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture, issue 21: Invisible Labor

Managing editors: Łukasz Zaremba, Agata Zborowska

Discussions surrounding the concept of 'immaterial labor' are a source of knowledge not only about the most significant contemporary processes of production and creation of value, but also about fundamental transformations of basic anthropological categories. These concern e.g. blurred divisions between private and public space, the factory and the home; between labor and leisure time (including sleep as a period that is both unproductive and the least directly related to consumption); and between consumption and production activities. Also, the notion of immateriality, stemming from a lack of material effects of labor, does not signify a disembodiment of labor or, more broadly, its severance from reality: an uninvolved energy, strength, the body, natural resources or physical machines. Immaterial labor does not only refer to the automation of work, not does it exclusively transform work into a mental activity. On the contrary, discussions on immaterial labor, including feminist revisions of the concept in the context of caring or reproductive labor, have made possible a reconnaissance of a multidimensionality of human involvement in labor: mental, physical, emotional etc.

The issue title – "Invisible Labor" – is an encouragement to a review of contemporary (not always novel) forms of labor and debates on them. We are interested in practices of overlooking of certain forms of labor; overlooking understood as an active process resulting from relations of power and submission, as well as of interests and their attendant life styles. After all, one of the principal practices linking e.g. creative labor, care work and communicative labor is their not being perceived as labor. We are therefore interested in contemporary – especially, critical – forms of representation of labor. We expect that a perspective emerging from visibility/invisibility will also allow us to discern these types of activities, professions and relations, the exclusion of which in the public sphere is attended by a powerful charge of the stereotype – ethnic, class or gender stereotypes (as observed, for instance, in sex work).

If Chaplin yoked to a production line in his "Modern Times" and Kracauer's Tiller Girls were to supply powerful images (also of emancipatory potential) of the socio-economic machinery of Fordism, which images adequately describe the machine of post-Fordist labor? What does a contemporary female worker look like, or a member of the precariat; how are labor and its position in the system of production to be manifested? How can relations of labors with respect to one another (not merely the hierarchical relation of employers to employees) be illustrated? How can groups of labor interests be represented so as not to lose sight of their constitutive differences?

And how can images be made both to gain emancipatory powers in the face of represented groups and shatter the dominant commonplace representations of labor-defined social relations? Moreover: is visibility a universal need in the world of labor and what could the benefits of invisibility be? We encourage you to reflect on contemporary models of labor in the context of their (existing as much as potential) representations, instruments of visualisation (and concealment, since also these strategies may prove tactically fruitful), pictorial means of laborers' self-representation and means of struggle for workers' rights.

Deadline for articles: June 30, 2018. We encourage authors to consult their article topics with the managing editors of the issue: lukaszaremba@gmail.com, zborowska.agata@gmail.com.

For editorial and technical requirements, go to: <http://pismowidok.org/index.php/one/about/submissions>.

Reference:

CFP: View, issue 21: Invisible Labor. In: ArtHist.net, Mar 31, 2018 (accessed Apr 8, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/17744>>.